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SUBJECT: HAITIAN-CANADIAN ANNOUNCED AS NEW GOVERNOR GENERAL

Classified By: POL M/C Brian Flora, reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

11. (C/NF) Summary: PM Martin today announced that the Queen has approved the appointment of Michaelle Jean, a prominent Quebec journalist and media personality, to a five-year term as Governor General when Adrienne Clarkson's term ends September 27. Jean covers all the right bases, indeed it would be difficult to pack more value into a single appointment: she is a strong federalist at a time when separatism is of concern; she is from Quebec, the province where the Liberals have lost the most ground in the past year; she is a woman and a minority from a party that is trying to shore up its base; she is an immigrant who has made good, as Canada struggles to contain Muslim extremists on the margins of society; and she has little political baggage (or even political experience) going into a highly charged political brawl as the minority Parliament resumes. On top of all this, she is strikingly photogenic, as well as being publicly engaging. But all this aside, it is difficult to argue with the PM when he says that this Governor General will "represent all of Canada to all Canadians, and will credibly represent the new Canada abroad." Jean will be the third woman and the first black Governor General, and the first Quebecker to hold the post since 1984.

THE NEW GOVERNOR GENERAL

12. (U) PM Martin announced today at a press conference that Michaelle Jean would be appointed the 27th Governor General (the Queen's representative in Canada), when Adrienne Clarkson's term expires on September 27. In brief remarks introducing the new Governor General to Canada, the PM thanked Adrienne Clarkson for the fine work she had done, highlighting her emphasis on the arts, Canada's North, and Canada abroad. He called Jean's story "extraordinary -- and extraordinary is precisely what we seek in a Governor-General -- who after all must represent all of Canada to all Canadians and to the rest of the world as well."

13. (U) Jean highlighted Canada's "immense and unlimited possibilities. . . rich with the daily contributions of people who have come from all over the world. . . The diversity of our landscape, people and cultural background gives us a sense of community in Canada." She went on to highlight the importance of giving voice to all of Canada's citizens and to preserving the founding values of Canada -- foremost among them "respect -- respect for others and through its recognition of each person's integrity and dignity." Jean earlier commented about what her success in journalism says about her adopted homeland and the changes it has undergone: "It would have been unthinkable 50 years ago, no, not even so long ago, that someone like me would occupy the position I now have." She most commonly described her professional ambition as that of being an "agent of change."

14. (SBU) While the PM has justifiable confidence that Madame Jean will carry out the duties of her office well, the many bases he shores up by the appointment were not lost on journalists and political commentators, indeed the first question at the announcement was whether the PM worried that people would see the appointment as being politically motivated. The PM answered that he thought Madame Jean was a perfect symbol of the evolution of the country, and highlights "what we are and what we want to be, as well as how we want to represent ourselves to the world."

SHORING UP KEY BASES

15. (C/NF) But all sincerity aside, the appointment does indeed shore up a number of critical bases for this Prime Minister, among them:

-- Quebec: Political analyst Bruce Campbell told Poloff he believes Jean's appointment "from the Quebec immigrant community, is highly significant, reflecting growing federalist concern about rising support among Quebec allophones (those whose first language is neither French nor English, or more generally, from beyond the French and English core groups) for sovereignty, up to 31% in a recent

poll. At the time of the 1995 Quebec referendum, support for Quebec sovereignty among allophones was in single digits." (The downside to this, however, is that Jean is not well known outside of francophone Canada, and the appointment will be seen as pandering to Quebec in certain circles.)

-- Women and Minorities: Liberal Senator David Smith said of the appointment, "it is a statement about what Canada is all about. We are the most multi-cultural country in the world. This symbolizes what we are all about and the openness of our society. I hope that young people will relate to her -- she's the future." The appointment can't hurt the Liberal efforts to hold on to its urban Ontario strongholds.

-- Immigrants: In addition to Quebec allophones, Madame Jean will appeal to all immigrants as a symbol of the lack of barriers to social momentum in Canada and will help shore up the Liberal contention that it is the natural party for immigrants. British Political Counselor recently told Poloff that HMG recognizes how advanced Canada is in integrating new immigrants over Britain. Canada prides itself on this, and in the wake of the London bombings would like to highlight it whenever possible to help quell the enemy within. Adrienne Clarkson was also an immigrant, but being from a much earlier generation (her family left Hong Kong in the 1930's), she did not have the kind of resonance with recent immigrants that Jean could have.

-- Media Presence: Like Clarkson, Jean comes directly from the world of broadcast journalism and is quite photogenic. Gerald Baier, a political scientist at the University of British Columbia, said "it certainly does suggest that it's very much a kind of media role, or a public communication role, and that is something well served by someone with that kind of experience." This will be good for Canada, of course, but it won't hurt the Liberals in the process.

-- Political Neutrality: Not much is known about Madame Jean's politics. She is thought to be a strong federalist, but she has not had any real involvement with partisan politics. This would tend to be a good thing in the contentious political battles to come, when the Liberals will want a Governor General who simply plays by the rules when making key decisions on the timing of elections and other key issues.

Biographic Data -----

16. (U) Michaëlle Jean was born in Port-au-Prince in 1957. Her family fled the Duvalier dictatorship in 1968 and settled in Quebec. Madame Jean studied Italian and Hispanic languages and literature at the University of Montreal, where she taught in the Italian Studies department from 1984-1986. She also studied at the Universities of Perouse, Florence and Catholic University in Milan during the 1980's and is fluent in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Creole).

17. (U) For the past 18 years Madame Jean has worked in journalism, where she was a reporter and host on news and radio programs for Radio Canada, leading to her anchoring several prominent news and public affairs radio programs in the mid-1990's. In 1999 she gained national prominence for hosting several English language programs. Since 2001 Madame Jean has anchored the weekend edition of Radio Canada's major francophone news broadcast Le Téléjournal and in 2004 she started her own show, Michaëlle, which is broadcast in both French-language public television networks. She has tried in her journalistic work to be broad based and penetrating. "For me, that's my biggest victory," she told the Citizen, "I refused to fall into a ghetto situation, for example, talk only of cultural or ethnic communities, immigration and so on. I wanted to cover everything -- national, international -- like a true citizen."

18. (U) Madame Jean has won critical acclaim for her documentaries, many of which she produced with her husband, filmmaker Jean-Daniel Lafond. One of their joint productions was the 1993 documentary "Tropic North" about what it was like to be black and Haitian in Montreal. Madame Jean has also been prominent in various social causes, including work with battered women and immigrants, and children at risk. She and Lafond have a seven-year old Haitian child that they adopted several years ago. Martin emphasized that this will be the first time in a long while that Rideau Hall will be occupied by a family.

19. (U) As part of her journalistic career, Madame Jean has often been outspoken. The Globe and Mail reports that after the 9/11 attacks she "expressed sympathy for the victims but also raised questions about the world's response," quoting her as saying "Why such outpouring and compassion for New York and so little for the hundreds and thousands of victims

in Rwanda a few years ago?" The paper also said she "drew a link between the attacks and U.S. foreign policy," saying she stated "the attacks on New York and Washington were, in a way, foreseeable."

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